for setting up of a Seismology Research Laboratory in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh;

(b) if so, whether the proposal is being reconsidered particularly when Narmada Valley is experiencing the disaster of earthquake; and

(c) if so, the time by which it is likely to be set up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) to (c) Sir, no proposal from the Council of Science and Technology, M.P., was received in 1993. However, the State Government of Madhya Pradesh had approached Government in India in 1993 for upgradation of earthquake monitoring facilities in the State. As a follow up, the India Meteorological Department, Government of India, has upgraded the Seismological Observatory at Bhopal by setting up a state-of-art broad-band equipment. This equipment is operational and recorded the recent Jabalpur earthquake of May 22, 1997 and generated data relating to the event.

[English]

Review of Performance of Steel Sector

1438. SHRI SANDIPAN THORAT : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether the performance of the steel sector has recently been reviewed;

(b) if so, the details thereof in terms of standard norms for PSU and Private Sector units separately;

(c) whether the steel sector has sought Government's intervention to help them in exports, and provide financial relief because of depressing conditions in domestic market; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) and (b) The Ministry of Steel periodically reviews the performance of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) under its administrative control only. The main parameters of review include interalia Memorandum of Undertaking (MOU) targets; performance of the previous years; expected performance with reference to modernisation/expansion programmes; other special and current areas of concern etc. The Ministry of Steel interacts with the private sector from time to time in order to ascertain their problems and to find solutions thereof.

(c) and (d) No specific request has been received from any producer for financial assistance for exporting steel. As per the Export-Import Policy, export of steel is freely allowed. However, Government has been taking a number of steps to enhance exports of steel which include :

(i) Full convertibility of export earnings at market rate of exchange;

(ii) Facility available to Exporters to import their requirement of raw materials duty free under the Advance Licensing Scheme;

(iii) Refund of the duty paid on any imported or excisable material used in the manufacture of export goods; and

(iv) Exemption of export earnings from income-tax under Section 80 HHC.

CAG Report on Railway Projects

1439. SHRI MANGAL RAM PREMI : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether attention of the Government has been invited to the newsitem captioned "CAG ne rail mantralaya ko aade haath liya, Pichli priyojnaye poori nahin hui aur nai haath mein li" appearing in the Dainik Jagran dated May 13, 1997;

(b) if so, the facts thereof; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The press report is factually correct as far as the contents of CAG report are concerned.

(c) New projects are taken up by the Government based on their perception of the requirements of new lines, gauge conversions etc. to provide the infrastructure for development. These projects are implemented alongwith other ongoing projects with funding as per prioritisation based on operation/stragetic considerations. The main reason for the slow progress of all these projects is constraint of resources. Best efforts are made with the Planning Commission/Finance Ministry to increase the budgetary support so that these projects can be optimally progressed.

STD Booths In Rajasthan

1440. SHRI MAHESH KUMAR M. KANQDIA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of STD public telephone booths proposed to be set up in Rajasthan during 1997-98;

(b) the number of pending applications for allotment of such booths; and

(c) the number of post offices in the State, where such facilitities are proposed to be made available during 1997-98?